

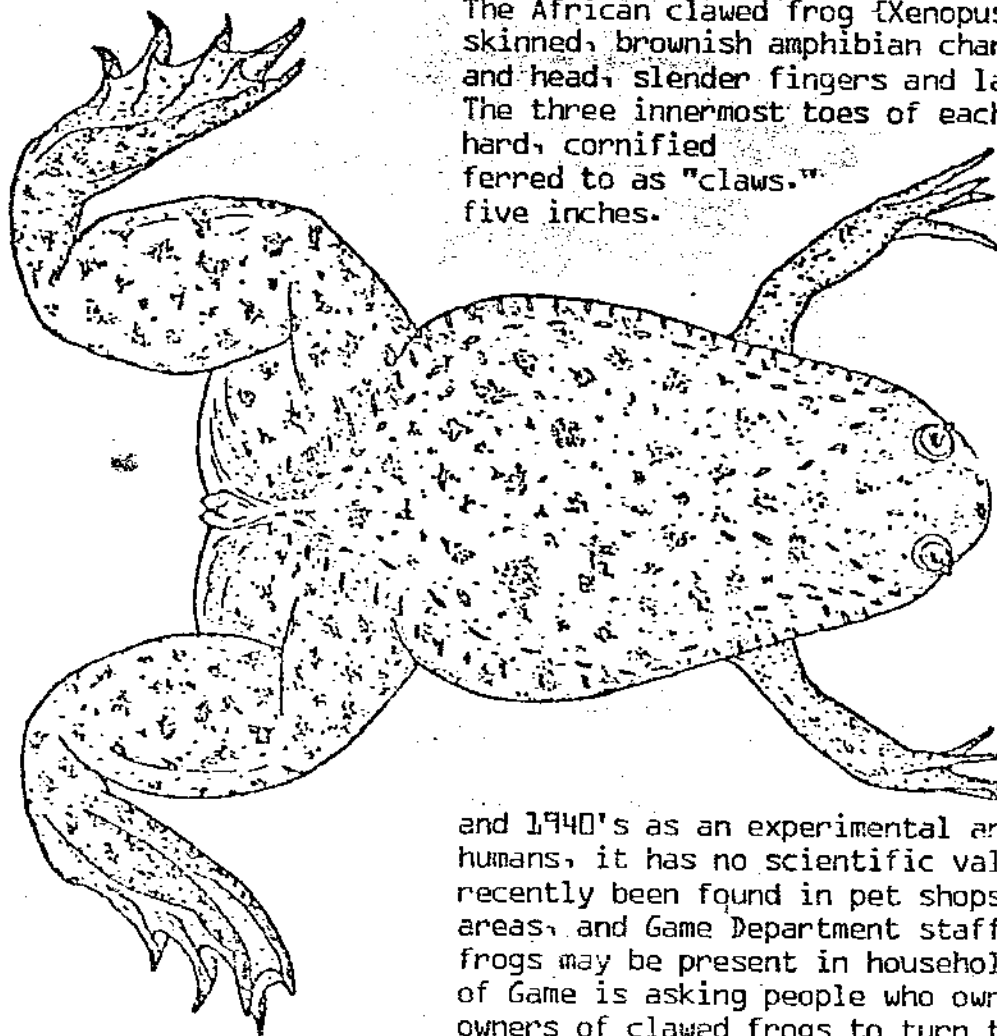
****ATTENTION****

This document is provided for historical purposes only.

Documents contained in the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife Document & Publication Archive may contain dated and/or incorrect information. The WDFW Document & Publication Archive is provided as a service to those interested in the history of fish and wildlife management in Washington State.

FACTSHEET: AFRICAN CLAWED FROG

The African clawed frog (*Xenopus laevis laevis*) is a smooth-skinned, brownish amphibian characterized by a flattened body and head, slender fingers and large, fully-webbed hind feet. The three innermost toes of each hind foot are capped with hard, cornified structures loosely referred to as "claws." Adult females may reach five inches.



The African clawed frog is one of four animals classified as deleterious (harmful) exotic species * because of the potential threat it poses to Washington's native wildlife. Along with the walking catfish, the muskellunge and the grass carp, the clawed frog has been outlawed in Washington. It is a criminal violation to possess or import any live specimens.

Although the African clawed frog was widely used throughout the world during the 1930's and 1940's as an experimental animal in pregnancy testing in humans, it has no scientific value today. The clawed frog has recently been found in pet shops here in major metropolitan areas, and Game Department staff suspect that large numbers of frogs may be present in household aquariums. The Department of Game is asking people who own or who have knowledge of owners of clawed frogs to turn them in at the nearest Department of Game office. No citations will be issued to citizens voluntarily bringing African clawed frogs to a Game Department office.

Biologists' concerns over the African clawed frog are based on the insatiable appetite of the frogs, their adaptability to a wide range of habitats and their reproductive capacity. While these factors are common in nature, they are generally held in check by other natural forces such as predators, disease, climate, etc., thus minimizing problems created by a particular species. Deleterious exotic species have few or none of these built-in natural checks, and they can literally explode into a mushrooming population that reduces or eliminates native wildlife species. To guard against such a situation, the Department of Game has taken the precautionary step of declaring illegal the possession or importation of African clawed frogs and other deleterious species.

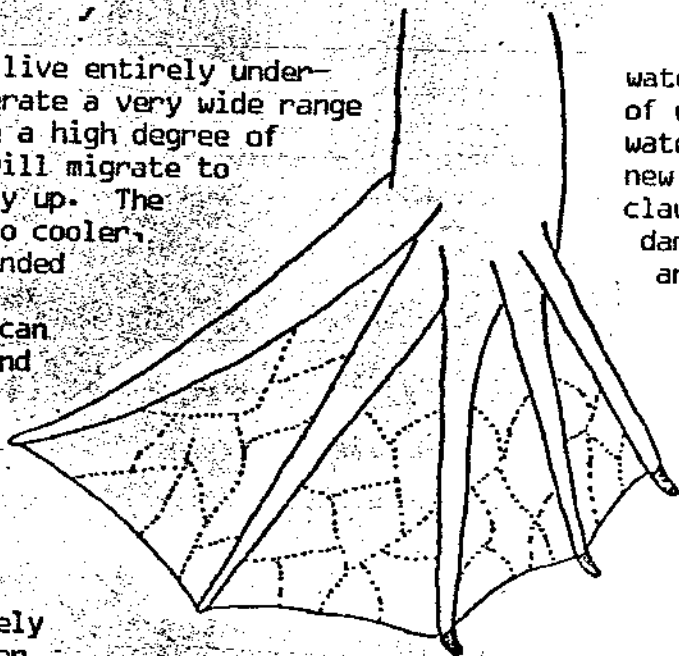
The following information, culled from decades of scientific and case studies, illustrates the potential threat of these exotic animals.

{ OVER }

Food Habits: Glutton-like feeding habits allow for successful introduction to virtually any habitat. As tadpoles the African clawed frogs feed on microorganisms, while as adults they will eat virtually everything, including: crayfish, aquatic insects and larvae, small fish and other amphibians, including native frog species. The African clawed frog makes a poor pet because it actively pursues and will eat aquarium fish.

Adaptability: African clawed frogs live entirely underwater (sur- of water) and can tolerate a very wide range of water salinity. Like the walking catfish, the frog will migrate to new areas when threatened or when breeding areas dry up. The clawed frog can also estivate, or move underground to cooler, damper subsoil animation, and live in a state similar to suspended

Reproductive Capacity: This species can reach sexual maturity in as little as one year, and it never reaches sexual maturity in native years. Since takes more than two years. Since native years to reach sexual maturity, the African clawed frog probably outproduces most native species. Coupled with their habit of devouring tadpoles of other native species, the African clawed frog can effectively limit competition for space and food from other American frogs.



Sketch of left hind foot. Note the three inner toes armed with claws.

water {sur- of water
water salinity.
new areas when
clawed frog can
damper subsoil
animation.

reach sexual
it never
native
years to
clawed
native
than the
predacious
frog specie
limit com-
native

What can you do? Turn in reports of African clawed frogs to the nearest office of the Department of Game. If you do not live near a Game Department office, call 1 - 800 - 562 - 5626 to report violations only.